



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Due to a lack of sufficient plant facilities in the Pribilof Islands, Bering Sea site of U. S. fur sealing operations, it was impossible this year to process 50,000 seal carcasses which otherwise would have been turned into meal, valuable as a constituent of poultry feed, and oil, which has many industrial uses, Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes said today.

The by-products plant on St. Paul Island was built at a time when the fur seal herd, by far the largest in the world, was much reduced in numbers. It now consists of some 2,500,000 animals and the government is able to take large numbers of skins annually without endangering continuance of the herd. This summer the take of pelts--117,164--was the largest in the history of government sealing operations. The single by-products plant available was large enough to process only about 55,000 carcasses. There is no by-products plant at all on St. George Island where about 20 percent of the sealing is done, according to a report by Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service which controls the sealing operations.

Some 750,000 pounds of seal meal were prepared this year, but a yield twice as large would have been possible had facilities been available to process all the carcasses, Dr. Gabrielson declared. "It is particularly regrettable," he said, "that it was necessary to waste seal carcasses this year when the demand for seal meal and oil is greater than ever before".

To make possible the processing of all carcasses in the future the President recently requested Congress to appropriate \$275,000 for the construction of a by-products plant on St. George Island, and doubling of the facilities on St. Paul Island.

The additional by-products facilities would make it possible to process enough additional carcasses to add approximately \$60,000 annually to U. S. income from the fur sealing operations. This would bring the annual return from by-products to about \$134,000.

Federal operation of fur-sealing in the Pribilof Islands has not only been a success from the conservation standpoint--the herd has increased from less than

(over)

200,000 animals when the government took over in 1910 to the present large number-- but it has been an important source of Federal revenue. Since the beginning of the fiscal year 1918, the sum of \$8,700,214 has been turned into the Treasury as net proceeds of the fur seal industry, the bulk of the profit coming, of course, from the sale of skins. The figure does not include the substantial amount which the government will receive from this year's record-breaking take.

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